

ELLI PEONIDOU

LONELY SHIP

Do not weep, for your weeping  
draws blood from me, lonely ship.  
I rested my hand delicately on your mast  
and my veins became heavy, as if honey- flooded.  
I put my forehead to your sorrow---  
seagull-white half circle  
obsessed by fear of darkness.  
A naked El-Greco madonna crucified  
on a sea-port's chair...  
The child slipping into slumber's further reaches.

Your stern a nightmare of timber;  
Your prow deep-sunk in a fish's heart  
which quivered in a last oxygenless paroxysm.  
Lonely ship, deep-delved in the midst of thought,  
twice-treble dreams of the old mariner  
at Garibaldi's cape off Brindisi.... tales  
of the boy from Rhodes, at fourteen a sailor  
at sixteen a seasoned seaman, at twenty  
a ship's officer already and at sixty  
still searching for those shoots  
which were somehow, somewhere, severed.

Sit you down beside me and let us drink to Rome's health  
---without the statues... and to that other Rome  
the Rome which knows no sleep and whose  
smoking sensual crowds  
make fun of her Colosseum  
selling Ceasar's heads  
upon platters accompanied  
by small bottles of Benedictine.

Lonely ship, lonely soul  
rip apart the ocean  
perhaps in its deepest depths  
you will find some companion soul  
flooded with the answer to your log's bitter call.

TRANSLATED FROM GREEK BY JOHN CORBIDGE